

RURAL TOPICS.

Some Practical Suggestions for Our Agricultural Readers.

PARIS-GREEN AND GREEN POTATOES.

We notice a statement that "The great bulk of green potatoes are evidently poisonous and not fit to be eaten by man or beast," and "A man might as well eat arsenic as eat a green potato." cannot affect the intelligent reader of this body as to say that Paris-green applied to the vines cannot and will not affect the roots. We allude to this quotation, because it evidently is intended to convey the idea that green potatoes are colored by the application of Paris-green, which is not the fact; green potatoes are simply made green by exposure to the sun when ripening, and we have known people who ate green potatoes before they were fully matured and spread them in the sun in order to green them, as it was considered to improve the seed. It is a false impression that Paris-green makes potatoes green, and that it is therefore a dangerous remedy for the potato beetle. This poison has been used very largely for many years, and has been found to be entirely safe when used in the manner mentioned, the object being to keep the leaves from being eaten by the insect, and in the case above mentioned, the object had a remedy of its own to propose in its stead. No remedy has yet been found which will keep the leaves from being eaten by the insect, and so easily applied as Paris-green, and the small amount used has no effect whatever upon the chemical growth of the plant. In fact, it is a little surprising that, notwithstanding the many years that Paris-green has been used during the past few years, so little is heard of injuries resulting from its use and handling.

THE LEEK.

The leek is somewhat doubtfully stated to be a native of Scotland. It was cultivated by the Egyptians in the time of Ptolemy, and has long been esteemed as a wholesome vegetable. The bulb is soft, and is mostly a continuation of the stem, which is used as a vegetable with many persons, and is used as an ingredient in soups, and for other purposes. All parts of the plant have a somewhat offensive odor, and an acrid taste, which is not so essential oil, which is in a great measure dissipated by decoction and may be obtained separately by distillation. The seeds are sown in early spring and are covered with a layer of soil about half an inch deep, and are transplanted in friable soil that has been well enriched. Good leeks cannot be produced on poor soils. For the purpose of facilitating the maturing of the leek, the plants may be covered in holes six inches deep and about three inches in diameter. A small portion of soil is spread over the roots at the bottom of this hole as a covering, and the plants are covered with the soil. The plants are gradually covered as they grow, and this covering renders them white and succulent. Sometimes the plants are set with the roots in the soil, and the soil placed against the stems as growth proceeds. There are several varieties in cultivation, and stems two inches in diameter are frequently produced by high manuring and special culture.

SILK COTTONS AND FIBERS.

Within a few months we have received several samples of the cottony matter attached to the seeds of the common milkweed, with the request that they should be noticed as furnishing a valuable fiber. First, the cottony matter of plants which yield a somewhat similar substance, and they are known as silk cottons. These have no felting properties, and are not fitted for weaving; but they are used for making them from being spun into threads, and their fibers have no strength for the manufacture of any durable cloth. In the manufacture of fabrics, three distinct classes of vegetable fibers are employed. First, the cottons, which are only a down produced in seed-pods, as cotton. Second, materials which consist of fibers taken from stems and leaves, as the hemp from stems of the banana, and the flax from the flax plant. The century plant. Third, the fibers taken from the inner bark of plants, as the mulberry, nettle, jute, hemp and many other trees, annual and biennial.

Cotton possesses a felting property owing to its being a fine membrane, ribbon-shaped, with a tendency to interlace itself, which gives it sufficient stiffness to be spun into threads. The fibers from the inner bark of plants are composed of fascicular fibers. They are capable of being divided into numerous threads, depending upon the processes employed, as soaking, carding, combing, etc.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS.

This is a variety of the common cabbage, and as a vegetable is highly esteemed by all who have ever eaten it, but its culture has so far been very limited in this country. The plant grows a small, round, and open, with somewhat wrinkled leaves, similar to those of the kind of cabbage known as the Savoy. The peculiarity of the Brussels sprouts consists in the buds, which are formed at the bases or axils of the leaves. These buds do not push into growth until the second year of the plant's growth, and then they soon run to seed stems; but in the case of the Brussels sprouts, they are kept all over the stem the first year of its growth, and so closely together that the stem is completely covered with them; these buds form small, miniature heads, which are very similar to the original leaves of the plant, and are the stem lengthens and the buds enlarge. These small heads are sometimes three inches in diameter; they are found in great numbers on the stem, and when once their value is recognized, they succeed well wherever any of the cabbage family will grow, and their culture does not differ in any degree from that of the common cabbage. Seeds sown now will afford heads in the fall.

STIRRING THE SOIL.

Some of the objects gained by stirring the soil are: First, allowing the descent of the roots of plants so that they may ramify readily in search of food. Second, to stir the soil and thereby mix its constituent parts, and thus increase its absorbent and retentive powers, and also to effect an equal and economical distribution of heat. Third, to destroy weeds, which would otherwise rob the crop of its food and thereby check its growth. Fourth, by opening the soil and rendering it susceptible to air and moisture, and by the decomposition of inert materials, both organic and inorganic, and by rendering them soluble they are prepared for the sustenance of plants. Fifth, by stirring the soil, the soil is exposed to the action of the sun, which brings them to the surface where the birds can prey upon them, thus preventing their further extension.

A writer in the *Germanian Telegraph* makes the following remarks on the subject of stirring the soil: "I have found (and my neighbors experience agree with mine) that new whitewash of lime is fatal to milk. If we are not using our milk-house during winter we whitewash it and allow the smell of the lime to pass off before we put milk in it, which should be for at least two months afterwards. Otherwise, if in constant use we wash the walls thoroughly with lime, and then repeat the whitewash in the spring. This fragrance being developed during the drying process, it is not imparted to the milk, but it is so as to be almost unbearable, and no other manipulation could make it right."

SWEET-SCENTED VERNAL GRASS. Although this grass is present in most pastures and hay meadows, it is only a small portion of herbage. It is not particularly relished by animals, although it is eaten along with other grasses. It has been shown in cow and sheep pastures that the presence of this grass, a sweet flavor to butter and mutton, a proceeding which has not proved effective. A cow fed for a week on this grass, and then put on a diet of clover, produced a butter of a sweet flavor to butter and mutton, a proceeding which has not proved effective. A cow fed for a week on this grass, and then put on a diet of clover, produced a butter of a sweet flavor to butter and mutton, a proceeding which has not proved effective.

PLUM TREES. The market for plums is always good, the more so because of their scarcity. And yet no more farms in this country may be found all the conditions for their successful culture. The great enemy to plum culture is the curculionid

weevil, which punctures the fruit and deposits an egg from which proceeds the grub which is the immediate cause of the destruction of the fruit. After the fruit falls the grub escapes, and another curculionid, in due time, is the result. A small space six feet square would hold a dozen trees, and this being fenced in and used as a run for poultry and hogs, the fruit would be consumed as it fell, and such of the grubs as escaped would be picked up by the poultry. We think that farmers, and others having space and poultry, should take the trouble to grow a few plum trees.

A NEW SUGAR TREE.

Under this heading the *Rural New Yorker* has some timely remarks on the yellow wood, *Fraxinus*, which is a native of the United States. This tree is one of the most desirable of our native trees. Many years ago, when asked the question, "What three trees would you recommend as the most perfect specimens of full-headed, shapely trees for a new lawn?" we replied: "First, *Virginia tulip*; second, *Oase*; and third, the *Yellow wood* or *ash-leaved maple*." But a little later we were asked the question, "What three trees would you recommend as the most perfect specimens of full-headed, shapely trees for a new lawn?" we replied: "First, *Virginia tulip*; second, *Oase*; and third, the *Yellow wood* or *ash-leaved maple*." But a little later we were asked the question, "What three trees would you recommend as the most perfect specimens of full-headed, shapely trees for a new lawn?" we replied: "First, *Virginia tulip*; second, *Oase*; and third, the *Yellow wood* or *ash-leaved maple*." 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